

INTRODUCTION

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The State Parks Master Plan 1997-2012 is a comprehensive planning document prepared for the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks. The purpose of this plan is to guide the acquisition, development and management of Louisiana's State Parks System for the next fifteen years.

The first State Parks Master Plan 1975-1990 was prepared by the Gulf South Research Institute (GSRI). The GSRI plan set forth the goals and objectives for Louisiana's state parks. It created a classification system and criteria for selection, development and management of state parks, state commemorative areas, and state preservation areas that were consistent with the objectives of the Office of State Parks. This framework has been successful, and, therefore, it has been incorporated into the State Parks Master Plan 1997-2012.

Building upon the successful aspects of the GSRI plan, the 1997-2012 plan guides the future development of the Louisiana State Parks System. This plan contends that the Office of State Parks must continue to maintain the high standards of quality for which the Louisiana State Parks System is known, while increasing the number of sites, facilities, acres and programs to bring Louisiana's offerings in line with comparable park systems throughout the nation.

This State Parks Master Plan 1997-2012 is a product of a comprehensive, team-oriented study and assessment. This approach combines statistical analyses, examinations of national recreation planning trends, professional expertise, user input and the Office of State Parks staff judgments. The outcome is a recommended plan of action to improve the Louisiana State Parks System over the next fifteen years.

This executive summary is a synopsis of the complete State Parks Master Plan 1997-2012. The summary begins with an analysis of the Louisiana State Parks System as a valuable recreational, educational, natural and economic resource for Louisiana. It then

outlines the mission statement and objectives for the Office of State Parks. This is followed by a brief synopsis of the action plan which explains how to attain the objectives for the fulfillment of the Office of State Parks mission. Strategies have been set forth by region, and an estimated cost for each strategy has been provided. It is our desire that the State Parks Master Plan 1997-2012 help Louisiana's State Parks System realize its full potential. Louisiana has a great wealth of natural attributes, a wonderful mixture of cultural heritage and vast recreational resources available for her citizens and her visitors. The potential for economic development as a result of these resources through the Louisiana State Parks System is astonishing.

To date, the Office of State Parks has been well-run and has benefitted from an administrative staff committed to providing the best possible recreational and educational experiences that fit within the Office of State Parks' mission. Many of the existing state parks and commemorative areas are of a quality that rivals other states' parks and parks operated by the National Park Service. Others, however, have suffered due to a lack of consistent funding. Given the budgetary limitations, the Office of State Parks' staff should be commended for maintaining the Louisiana State Parks System at high quality levels over the years.

The quality of the Louisiana State Parks' facilities is high. However, the number of facilities and recreational opportunities provided is low when compared with other southern states. For example, when using overnight facilities (campsites and cabins) and park acreage per capita as indicators of a state's recreational demand/need, Louisiana ranks last, or almost last, when compared with other southern states. This is true of several other indicators as well. Louisiana has fallen behind due to the low funding levels over the past fifteen years that have impeded the Louisiana State Parks System's ability to expand its recreational, educational and economic opportunities.

THE VALUE OF THE

Unpredictable and unstable funding is also responsible for deficiencies in other facilities. During the first years under the GSRI plan, funding for state parks and commemorative areas was fairly high, and the Office of State Parks was able to develop many quality sites and facilities in accordance with the GSRI plan. From 1975 to 1985 many of the goals under the GSRI plan were met and the Louisiana State Parks System was developing on a timely basis. However, budget cuts from 1986 to 1995 stymied the development of the Louisiana State Parks System, and the period of expansion ended. During these difficult times, budget cuts forced the closure of some sites for a period of ten months. Other sites were transferred from the Office of State Parks, layoffs ensued and programs were cut. The Louisiana State Parks System has never completely recovered from these devastating budget cuts. While some effects of these cuts are still felt today, this plan will pave the way to a brighter future.



ings; 2) the economy of the other Louisiana parishes; and 3) the economy of the state of Louisiana.

According to data derived from three State Parks User Surveys, it is estimated that the annual expenditures made by visitors in 1994 was \$30,803,848. Of this amount, \$11,099,487 was spent by visitors in the parishes where the facilities are located, \$12,464,929 was spent by visitors in parishes en route to and from parks and \$7,239,433 was spent in the park visitors' home parishes in preparation for their visit. Expenditures by out-of-state visitors to Louisiana's state parks facilities constituted 44% of all expenditures or \$13,477,726.

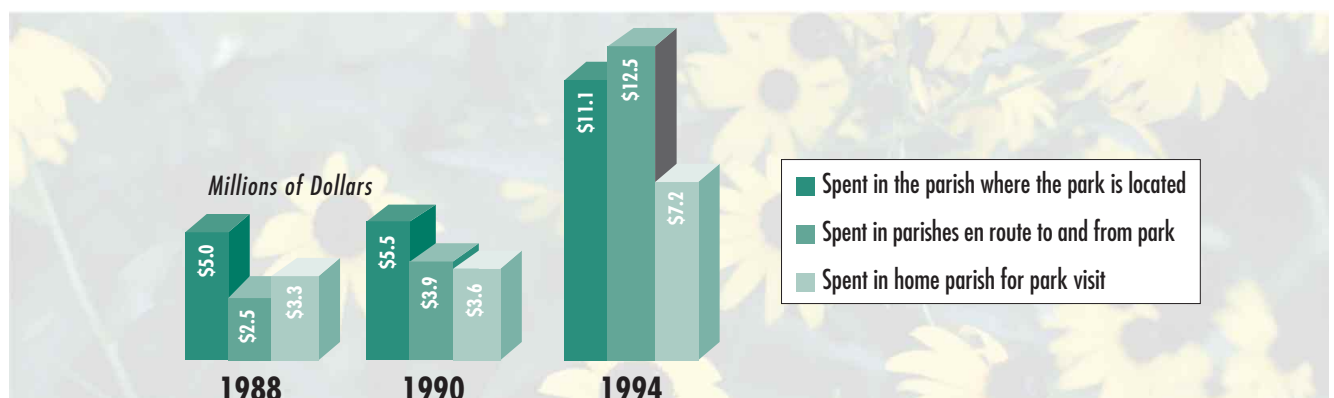
An examination of the studies (for 1988 and 1994) reveals that expenditures being made have increased since the first study was conducted in 1988.

The Value of Louisiana's State Parks System

LOCAL AND STATE ECONOMIES

A study of the economic impact of visit-related and Office of State Parks' expenditures indicates three affected economies: 1) the economy of the park parishes, or the parishes that contain the Office of State Parks' hold-

Exhibit I. Total Visit-Related Expenditures



STATE PARKS SYSTEM

Exhibit II. Economic Impact by Park Parish, Other Louisiana Parish and Louisiana Economies

Source: 1994 State Park Visitor Survey Analysis by ATRC.
Data available only for the years 1988, 1990, & 1994.

For each of the three economies studied, expenditures made by non-residents were used to determine the economic impact of additional money brought into the economy. The expenditures which were made by the Office of State Parks at facilities for operational and maintenance costs are new monies into the economies of the parishes where the facilities exist and are, therefore, calculated as part of the economic impact for those parishes.

Park Parish Economies - There was a total of \$11,099,487 in visit-related expenditures, and Office of State Parks operational expenditures yielding \$30,471,681 in economic impact on park parishes.

Other Louisiana Parish Economies - For the economy of the other parishes in Louisiana, a total of \$12,464,929 in expenditures was made by park visitors en route to and from the facility they were visiting. This yielded an economic impact of \$32,788,188.

Louisiana Economy - Expenditures made by out-of-state visitors to Louisiana's state parks' facilities were \$13,477,926 generating \$35,440,550 of total economic impact for Louisiana's economy.

Historical Economic Impact Trends - Economic survey data using the same economic model as in 1994 are also available for the year 1988. In comparing these sets of data, it is evident that increases in new money entering these economies has had a strong economic impact. The Office of State Parks spent \$5,424,103 operating and maintaining the state parks included in the economic impact analysis. **For every dollar spent, it fostered an economic impact of \$5.62 to the economies of the park parishes, \$6.04 to the economies of the other Louisiana parishes and \$6.53 to the economy of Louisiana.** State parks offer an economic boost to all three economies, not just to the parishes where the parks are located.

Exhibit III - Economic Benefits of the Louisiana State Parks System

Other Parish Economies

Louisiana Economy

Park Parish Economies

Office of State Parks



Millions of Dollars

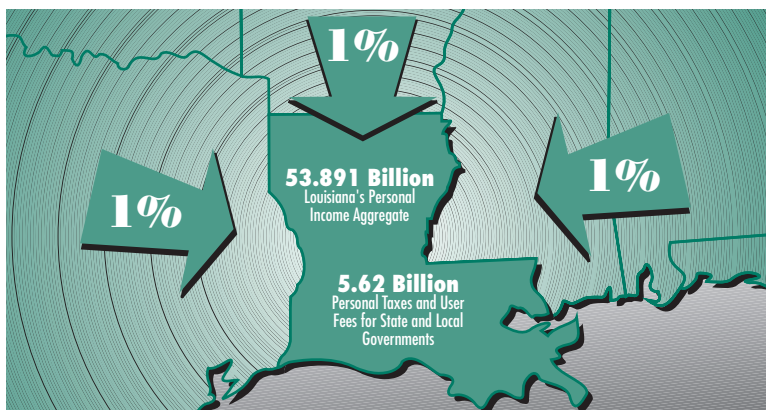
ESTABLISHMENT OF RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

This study examines the possible economic gains to be made by manufacturing and retirement/tourism industries and actions Louisiana can implement to enhance these economic opportunities. Findings suggest that the Louisiana State Parks System can make a major contribution in facilitating these gains.

By the year 2040 the age sixty-two plus component of America's population will more than double to a level of 87,434,000 persons. This age group will increase by 2.051 million persons from 1994 to 2000, by an additional 7.482 million from 2000 to 2010, by another 16.456 million from 2010 to 2020, by another 16.178 million from 2020 to 2030, and by an additional 5.785 million from the years 2030 to 2040. Those persons will have an aggregate yearly income of \$2.053 trillion and an estimated Medicare entitlement of \$266 billion. They will create more than ten times the economic stimulus of the manufacturing and mining bases of the sixteen southern states. Florida and Georgia had virtually equal 1992 manufacturing bases (between \$16 billion and \$17 billion in each state), while Louisiana had a \$9.5 billion combined manufacturing and mining base. But Florida's total economy (\$266 billion) more than doubled Georgia's (\$126 billion), and it more than quadrupled Louisiana's (\$68 billion). Florida had a retirement/tourism primer of \$110.4 billion (\$61.5 billion in dividends, interest, and rent, plus \$48.9 billion in transfer payments), whereas Georgia had a combined total of only \$36.3 billion, and Louisiana had a combined total of only \$23.6 billion.

Each retired couple's income (an average \$53,046 per year) will result in an additional \$69,879 to the trade and services sectors of the state in which the couple retires. When taxed at Louisiana's 1991 personal rates, that income will yield \$4,320 in state and local government user fees, \$1,543 in personal state income taxes, and \$6,957 in state and local sales taxes. **An inward migration of only 1 percent of the 87.4 million retirees will add \$53.891 billion to Louisiana's personal income aggregate by the year 2040. This will create \$5.62 billion in personal taxes and user fees for state and local governments in Louisiana. See Exhibit IV.**

Exhibit IV. - Values of Retirement Community





GROWTH IN THE RETIREMENT / TOURISM INDUSTRY

By virtue of its natural resources and cultural amenities, Louisiana has the potential for a significant amount of tourism development. The program established for retirement inducement will also enhance tourism, and tourism can greatly influence pro-Louisiana retirement location decisions.

Potential retirees assign high location priorities to good health care facilities, a low cost of living, a pleasant climate, and abundant recreational facilities. The Office of State Parks can most effectively contribute to the efforts of attracting retirees by providing abundant and quality recreational facilities. These facilities are often the first impression retirees have when traveling through the state and may significantly impact their desire to settle in Louisiana.

An individual state cannot control its climate, but a state with climactic advantages can improve its physical attractiveness, recreational potential and overall quality of life. Any viable Louisiana economic initiative based upon the retirement and tourism industries must include the following:

- **Recreational and cultural enhancements**
- **Natural habitat preservation and restoration**
- **Road (and other transportation) improvements**
- **Scenery enhancements:**
 - **Litter elimination**
 - **Roadside vegetation restoration and landscaping**
- **Gardens and nature trails**

Other southern states have a considerable lead—in some states as much as four decades—in positioning themselves to capitalize on their retirement industry potential. Their public and private sectors have developed massive recreational complexes—such as those at Pinehurst, Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head and Naples—plus comprehensive programs for other amenities. Louisiana cannot close the gap without a firm commitment and massive resource deployment (perhaps an eventual \$300 to \$400 million). **However, the returns will far exceed the outlay; sixty-four hundred retiree couples residing in Louisiana for a period of ten years will generate more than \$800 million in state and local government revenues**, more than enough to offset the \$400 million investment and financing charges.

Exhibit V. - Economic Return from Investment in Retirees

